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Montana State University receives National Science Foundation grant to study Montana forest and game management

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Montana State University has been awarded a $14,300 National Science Foundation grant for a two-year study that will provide a broader base for Montana forest and game management, MSU officials announced.

The basic objective of the study is an accurate description of the forests of northwestern Montana, according to Dr. James R. Habeck, assistant professor of botany and director of the project. About 75 forests will be studied in detail, with particular attention to forests not subjected to recent disturbance from cutting and big game animals, he said.

Information will be collected on kinds and numbers of forest plants and on how the plants respond to such environmental factors as altitude, climate, soil and fire.

Good Management of forested areas requires an understanding of all the plants in the forest, not just the relatively few economically important tree species that have been studied to date, Dr. Habeck pointed out. Knowledge of the ecology of unmanaged forests will help forest and game managers evaluate the results of their work in forests that are intensively managed for wood production or game habitat, he explained.

The MSU study will yield an accurate description of the composition of undisturbed forests and information about the ecological behavior of forest plants. With these data as reference points, natural resource managers can better assess the changes brought about by lumbering activities or by over-utilization of game animals, the MSU researcher believes.

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